

Supporting Children & Families during COVID-19



We can all do our part to help families remain healthy and safe, especially during challenging times. Now more than ever parents and other caregivers will likely need extra support. It may be helpful to check in to see how they are doing, be there to listen, and just offer support or help if needed.

Coping with Changes

Changes in routine can be hard, especially when you are home and unable to do a lot of the things you might usually enjoy. To help your family adjust, you might consider:

- Maintaining a healthy diet, good sleeping habits, and proper hygiene practices
- Keeping your family routine as normal as possible, like bedtimes, meals, and exercise
- Making sure you have basic supplies (food, water, soap, first aid items) and medications readily available
- Encouraging your children to help with chores
- Planning things to do as a family that you enjoy, like games, movies, and exercise
- Trying relaxation techniques to reduce stress
- Keeping your child(ren) connected to friends and family in other ways, like by phone or on the internet
- Making sure your child(ren)'s medical team is involved to help monitor any pre-existing conditions
- Using any homeschool or distance learning opportunities available that focus on the educational, physical, and mental health needs of children
- Contacting a mental health professional if you notice signs of anxiety and/or depression in children including changes in appetite, sleep disruptions, aggression, irritability, and fears of being alone or withdrawn

Checking in with Families

It is important to remind others that you are there to help and support them through this challenging time, not judge them. You may consider asking questions like:

- How are things going at home? Are you worried about anything? Is there anything you need?
- What does a typical day look like for you? What do you like best about your new routine?
- Who helps support you? Are you able to connect with them right now?
- Since the pandemic started, what's changed for your family? Has anything been more of a struggle?
- Is everyone in your family able to get what they need? You can ask about food, housing, income/jobs, safety, education, health, heat, internet, etc.

- What are some proud moments you've had during this time of crisis? What have you learned during this experience?

If you are helping a family who is homebound, you should also remember to:

- Stay informed and explain social distancing recommendations in a positive and age-appropriate manner
- Practice patience and tolerance (which can be difficult during this time), and remember that being homebound is an adjustment for everyone
- Create a space where they feel comfortable expressing concerns and asking questions

Keeping Kids Safe

Reports to Missouri's Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline have **dropped dramatically** during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, there have been around 44% fewer calls this year in April than there were in 2019.

When children stay at home, they are isolated from places where adults often look out for their safety and well-being, like schools, child care facilities, and places of worship. This makes it even more important for people to watch out for warning signs for abuse or neglect. If a child tells you something concerning, consider if you can safely follow-up with their caregiver. If not, you should:

- **Call 911 immediately if you are concerned someone is in immediate danger.**
- **Call the Missouri Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline toll-free at 1-800-392-3738 if you are concerned a child is being abused or neglected. Our team is available to help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**

If you are not sure if you should call, please do. Our team will be able to decide if a family needs our help or if there are other community supports that may be able to help.

Helpful Community Resources

General support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Missouri Services Navigator has information on over 2,000 programs and services available The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services has helpful information and resources to help during the COVID-19 pandemic The Missouri Department of Social Services will continue to make sure you get the services you need while protecting your health and the health of our team members
Financial & other Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, also known as Temporary Assistance (TA), provides cash benefits to eligible low-income families for the household's children such as clothing, utilities and other services Unemployment Benefits during COVID-19
Food & Nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food Stamp (SNAP) Benefits Food Banks or Pantries: www.feedingmissouri.org or the Missouri Services Navigator The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) assures that nutritious meals and snacks are served to children and eligible adults enrolled in child care centers, family child care homes, after school programs, emergency shelters, and adult day care programs by providing reimbursement for meals that meet minimum nutritional standards
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missouri Medicaid, called MO HealthNet, covers qualified medical expenses for individuals who meet certain eligibility requirements
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) can help you in two ways: Energy Assistance/Regular Heating (EA) and Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP) Missouri Housing Assistance Resources
Crisis Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent Link can help parents find information and support for daily living, home management, family well-being, especially during the COVID-19 Pandemic The Home Visiting Program links eligible families to services and resources within their community to help encourage child development and healthy families Throughout Missouri, MCADSV member organizations provide help to victims of domestic and sexual violence and are committed to providing the best services to victims in their communities Missouri Kids First #Essential4Kids: Resources to Protect Kids from Abuse During COVID-Crisis
Substance Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Division of Behavioral Health is responsible for assuring the availability of substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery support services for the State of Missouri
Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missouri Department of Mental Health offers resources to help during the pandemic
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) offers regular updates related to COVID-19 and DESE and/or public school operations
Child Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Child Care Subsidy Program helps eligible Missouri families with the cost of child care Child Care Aware of Missouri (1-866-892-3228) can help you find a child care provider near you
COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention, Symptoms, Treatment and Transmission – DHSS How to Protect Yourself & Others – CDC
Family Well-Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-Care in the Time of Coronavirus When Siblings Won't Stop Fighting Single Parenting During Coronavirus Crisis